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ABSTRACT

This report evaluates year-long wilderness camping rehabilitation program for juvenile delinquents believed "emotionally problemed." The remote camps teach through an experience curriculum encompassing daily camping style tasks, with integration of experience via three-day home visits every six weeks followed by written reports by parents. Data profiling the population, aftercare and recidivsim reveal that the younger offender is more likely to recidivate, that placements are only half of capacity (partly due to overlong stays averaging 16 months and partly due to legal considerations), almost all youngsters are first commitments and younger than in other commitment programs, white youth placement exceeds their commitment proportion, aftercare diminishes sharply after three months, school attendance parallels this drop, and the recidivism success rate is 53% after a year, dropping to 40% half a year later. (LS)

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# Evaluation of Florida's Eckerd Wilderness Camp Program

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## Youth Services Program

PLANNING
COORDINATION
UNIT

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## ECKERD WILDERNESS CAMPS

### A. DESCRIPTION

The Eckerd Wilderness Camps are administered by the Jack and Ruth Eckerd Foundation. They are designed for the rehabilitation of the "emotionally problemed" child. There are four camps in Florida: three are located in HRS District III, and one in HRS District I. Each camp includes several hundred acres of woodland and can accommodate 50 campers.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Camp E-MA-CHAMEE | District I | Milton, Florida |
| Camp E-KEL-ETU | District III | Silver Springs, Florida |
| Camp E-HOW-KEE | District III | Brooksville, Florida |
| Camp E-NINI-HASSEE | District III | Floral City, Florida |

The Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services contracts with the Eckerd Foundation to provide services to 105 youth per year who are committed to the Department as delinquents and are believed to be emotionally problemed. The Eckerd Wilderness Camps are budgeted for an average length of stay of one year in keeping with the youths' specialized service needs.

The camps are remote from population centers and are self-contained. Five groups, each comprised of ten youngsters and two counselors, design, build and maintain their own campsites. These campsites include sleeping areas, a wash-up area and a kitchen shelter for preparing and eating meals on the days when the camp cooks are off-duty.

Much of the activity in the camp focuses on self-evaluation, camp maintenance, and planning for trips. No formal education program is included, until the last few months of the camper's stay. Learning is believed to take place through an "experience curriculum", that is, through becoming adept at wood crafts, writing for the camp newspaper, planning and preparing meals, planning for trips and actually carrying them out. Each day ends with a "pow-wow" at which each camper evaluates the day's activities and his/her actions during the day. Religious services planned by the campers are held twice a week.

In an attempt to integrate the wilderness experience and the changes taking place within the camper, "Homesday" visits are scheduled for three days every six weeks. Written reports are prepared for the Camp by the parents following each "Homesday" visit.

Each Eckerd Camp has a Resident Director and a staff of approximately 21, including an Assistant Resident Director, Group Work Supervisor, two Family Workers, twelve Counselors, two Cooks, and Clerical and Maintenance staff. The Family Workers coordinate contacts between the Camp, the families of campers, and the referring agencies.

Youngsters are referred for placement in an Eckerd Camp after they have been committed as delinquents and when there is evidence of emotional difficulties. The Family Workers are responsible for initial screening to determine if a youth meets the necessary criteria for admission.

The admission criteria for campers relate to age, physical condition, intelligence, and behavior patterns. The camper must be between 8 and 14 years, in good physical health, able to function within the program (minimum I.Q. of 70), be able to communicate, and must have a psychological or neurological evaluation. Additionally, the camper must have a parent or parent substitute with whom the camper will be living upon release. Admission selection is made jointly by the camp staff, the Family Worker, the youth, and his/her family.

Once in the program, youth are assigned to a group based on program balance. While in camp, regular progress notes are kept by the counselors, individual goals are set for the camper, and the Family Worker acts as an intermediary between camp and home. Campers go for "Homesday" visits and their progress or lack of it is reported back to camp by parents. Parents are encouraged to come to camp for visits. The decision as to when a child is ready to go home is made by the camp staff, the child's group, and the family.

## B. DATA BASES

Three distinct sources of data are utilized in this report in order to cover all relevant information available on wilderness camp youths. The first source is a computerized data file which includes basic demographic variables plus information on the commitment, placement, and subsequent movement, i.e., transfers, absconsions, furloughs, of all committed youth. This data file was created in December 1976 with a one-day survey of all youths in commitment programs on that date and is continuously updated from commitment packages and recap reports from all programs.

A cohort comprised of all placements in the Eckerd Youth Camps during the period January to October 1977 was selected for this study. The ten-month time period was necessary to obtain a large enough group of cases for analysis. Due to the length of stay of youngsters in the Eckerd Camps, only three youths of the cohort group of fifty-five were furloughed before October 31, 1977. The data file was utilized for descriptive data on youths placed in the Eckerd Camps during the first ten months of 1977.

Data regarding transfers and average length of stay on commitment status were also obtained from the data file on youths furloughed from the Eckerd Camps during calendar year 1977.

The second data set is comprised of information on Aftercare (AC), available from Case Review Forms, which are completed monthly on all youths who are under field supervision. Included are reports on the frequency and types of services rendered to the youth as well as a record of violations and type of discharge. This study will examine all Aftercare data for calendar year 1977, for youths furloughed to Aftercare from an Eckerd Youth Camp. Since the data card is filled out on a youth every month he/she is under supervision, this aggregation of data includes multiple cards on each case, i.e., one for the first month on AC, one for the second month on AC, etc. These data will be analyzed by groupings of number of months on AC, and percentages will be presented rather than number of cases in order to minimize the problems of duplication.

The third source of data for the study is the Youth Services central commitment files, which were checked for recidivism information since furlough. For this data base, it is necessary to select a sample of youths who

have been out of the program long enough to allow for an 18-month follow-up of their record of subsequent law violations.

July 1976 was the last month for which releases could be utilized and still have an 18 month follow-up, and working backward to obtain a large enough group for analysis, June 1975 was the last month included. Utilizing all releases during this fourteen-month period, a population size of 57 was obtained.*

*During this time period only three camps: E-MA-CHAMEE, E-HOW-KEE, and E-NINI-HASSEE were operational.

TABLE 1
Population Profile
of January-October 1977
Youth Camp Placements*

| SEX | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Female: | 8 | 14.5 |
| Male: | 47 | 85.5 |
| | 55 | 100.0% |

| AGE | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| 9: | 1 | 2.4 |
| 10: | 1 | 2.4 |
| 11: | 5 | 12.2 |
| 12: | 4 | 9.8 |
| 13: | 16 | 39.0 |
| 14: | 10 | 24.4 |
| 15: | 4 | 9.8 |
| | 41 | 100.0% |

Mean Age: 13.5 years

| RACE | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Black: | 8 | 20.0 |
| White: | 31 | 77.5 |
| | 1 | 2.5 |
| | 40 | 100.0% |

| OFFENSE | Number | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Felony: Against Persons | 3 | 7.0 |
| Felony: Against Property | 25 | 61.0 |
| Felony: Victimless | -- | -- |
| Misdemeanor: Against Persons | 1 | 2.0 |
| Misdemeanor: Against Property | 6 | 15.0 |
| Misdemeanor: Victimless | 1 | 2.0 |
| Ungovernable | 3 | 8.0 |
| Technical | 2 | 5.0 |
| | 41 | 100.0% |

* Where the total shown differs from 55, missing information on that variable accounts for the variance.

## C. PROFILE OF THE ECKERD WILDERNESS CAMP POPULATION

From January to October 1977 the data file on committed youth showed 55 campers admitted to the Eckerd Wilderness Camps. Table 1 displays the basic population profile information.

This information is collected on all committed youth for management, evaluation and planning purposes. Trends in age, sex and commitment offense enable the Program Office to plan for programs to meet anticipated needs. The data in Table 1 can be compared to similar data for other commitment programs and aids in evaluating the success of the program. Previous evaluations of other Youth Services programs indicate that recidivism is negatively related to age: the younger a child is when furloughed, the more likely that child is to recidivate. This finding appears to be supported by the recidivism data in the current evaluation.

The budgeted number of slots for the Wilderness Camps is 105 per year, 10 for females and 95 for males. Placements during this ten-month period included 47 males (85.5%) and 8 females (14.5%) which closely approximates the statewide averages for male and female commitments, but is considerably smaller than the budgeted capacity. The camps should be admitting 105 youth per year.

The average age of Wilderness Camp placements was 13.5 years. One-fifth of all placements were black youths. The proportion of white youths is higher than is usual in Youth Services programs, since whites represent only 60 percent of all commitments. The commitment charges for approximately three-fourths of the youths were offenses against property.

The variable of committing district was examined to discover if there were patterns in utilization of the Eckerd Camp program. All districts except X and XI had placed at least one child in a camp during the nine-month period. Districts I, II, IV, and VI were the heaviest users of this resource and together accounted for 72.7% of all youngsters placed. Table 2 (below) displays the committing districts and Camps of entry. These findings are important in planning and developing self contained resources for each district, which is the intent of the Youth Services Program Office.

Table 2

District for Youth Placed in Eckerd Camps

| District | District I E-MA-CHAMEE | District III E-NINI-HASSEE | District III E-HOW-KEE | District III E-KEL-ETU | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I | 10 | - | - | - | 10 |
| II | 13 | - | - | - | 13 |
| III | - | - | - | 2 | 2 |
| IV | 2 | - | - | 7 | 9 |
| V | - | 4 | 2 | - | 6 |
| VI | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 8 |
| VII | - | - | - | 2 | 2 |
| VIII | 1 | 2 | - | 1 | 4 |
| IX | - | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 27 | 8 | 3 | 17 | 55 |

Type of commitment was a variable of concern to determine if the campers were mainly "repeaters," that is, if they had been committed to Youth Services previously, or if this was their first commitment. Fifty-two of the fifty-five youth, or 94.5%, were initial commitments. Two were recommitments, and one youth had been revoked from aftercare. Type of entrance was also examined and yielded the information that for 46 (84%) of the youth, the Eckerd Camp placement was an initial placement; only nine youngsters were transferred into the Camps from other Youth Services Programs.

The computerized commitment files were utilized to determine length of commitment for cases furloughed from the Eckerd Camps during the period July 1, 1977 through December 31, 1977. A total of 34 youths were furloughed during this period; the average length of commitment for these youth was 502.57 days (16.5 months).

The budgeted cost per child per day for the Eckerd

Camps (determined by dividing the allocated cost by the product of the budgeted number of slots times 365 days) is $23.19. Utilizing this figure and assuming a one-year stay, the cost per case should be $8,464.35. However, the average length of stay in the Eckerd Camp program was 460.11 days (15.1 months) yielding a cost per case of $10,669.95. This cost does not include any commitment time spent in other programs if the child transfers into or out of the Eckerd Camp instead of being initially placed there and furloughed out. However, the costs do include administrative costs incurred by the Eckerd foundation. Such costs are not included in programs operated by the state and comparison of purchase of service programs costs cannot be equated.

During the same six-month period, three additional youths exited from the camps through transfers. Of these, one was transferred to a community non-residential program, one to a community residential program, and one to a training school. Of all 37 youths exiting during this six-month time period, 92% were furloughs.

## D. AFTERCARE INFORMATION

As noted previously, a Case Review Form (CRF) is completed monthly on each youth on Aftercare. The analyses which follow are based on an aggregattion of CRF's for calendar year 1977 for youths who were furloughed from the Wilderness Camps. This aggregation yielded 479 CRF's on former Youth Camp residents with a range of 0 to 719 months on aftercare.* From 0-3 months on aftercare there was an average of 43 forms each month; from 4-6 months an average of 37 forms each month; from 7-9 months an average of 17 forms; from 10-12 months 15 forms; from 13-18 months 6 forms; and for 19 or more months 2 forms per month.

The technique of arranging the data according to the number of months each youth had been under Aftercare supervision when the CRF was completed allows one to see how AC services vary according to how long the child has been under supervision. Having viewed the data on a month-by-month basis and determined that services vary little within certain ranges of length of AC supervision, the decision was made to present grouped data. The problem of duplication of cases is minimized by presenting percentages of cases receiving each service rather than numbers. Table 3 includes four cross-tabulations which show the pattern of service provision to Aftercare cases. For each section, the percentages are figured vertically. Thus, in Table A, of the approximately 43 youths on Aftercare for 0 to 3 months, 84% attended no counselor groups, while in Table B, it can be seen that for this same group of youth, 12% were not seen individually by their counselor.

*Cases with extremely long aftercare stays are probably errors in coding; there were 22 cases which showed were more than 30 months on aftercare.

## Table 3

## Aftercare Services

A. Percent of Wilderness Campers Involved in Groups (number of groups attended each month by number of months on Aftercare)

| Number of Counselor Groups Attended | Number of Months on AC | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 0 - 3 | 4 - 6 | 7 - 9 | 10 - 12 | 13 - 18 | 19+ |
| 0 | 84 | 86 | 94 | 87 | 97 | 81 |
| 1 - 2 | 8 | 9 | 2 | 7 | 0 | 5 |
| 3 - 4 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 8 |
| 5 + | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 6 |
| TOTAL | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

(N=479)

B. Percent of Campers Receiving Individual Contact by Aftercare Counselor

| Number of Individual Contacts with Youth | Number of Months on AC | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 0 - 3 | 4 - 6 | 7 - 9 | 10 - 12 | 13 - 18 | 19+ |
| 0 | 12 | 22 | 22 | 42 | 42 | 28 |
| 1 - 2 | 29 | 29 | 40 | 38 | 32 | 41 |
| 3 - 4 | 30 | 26 | 26 | 7 | 21 | 14 |
| 5 + | 29 | 23 | 12 | 13 | 5 | 17 |
| TOTAL | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Table 3 (continued)

C. Percent of Camper Parents Who Were Contacted Individually by Aftercare Counselor

| Number of Individual Counselor Contacts | Number of Months on AC | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 0 - 3 | 4 - 6 | 7 - 9 | 10 - 12 | 13 - 18 | 19+ |
| 0 | 11 | 29 | 28 | 51 | 58 | 41 |
| 1 - 2 | 44 | 45 | 42 | 31 | 29 | 36 |
| 3 - 4 | 26 | 16 | 18 | 13 | 5 | 19 |
| 5 + | 19 | 10 | 12 | 4 | 8 | 5 |
| TOTAL | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

D. Percent of Campers with a Volunteer Friend

| | Number of Months on AC | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 0 - 3 | 4 - 6 | 7 - 9 | 10 - 12 | 13 - 18 | 19+ |
| Yes, Volunteer Friend | 7 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 0 |

These tables also show: Part (A) that during their aftercare supervision period, very few youth attend any groups; Part (B) that the percentage of youth having individual contact with their Aftercare counselor is highest during the first nine months on Aftercare and drops off sharply after 9 months; Part (C) that 70% of the parents are contacted by the Aftercare counselor at least once or twice a month during the first 9 months on Aftercare; and Part (D) that Volunteer Friends are utilized in less than 10% of the cases and usually only during the first 6 months.

Youths released from Youth Camps tend to be no older than 14 to 15 years at the time of release. Compulsory school laws would suggest that all of those released would be in school for at least a year after their release to Aftercare. During the first three months in Aftercare, 81% of the Youth Camp Aftercare cases were involved in academic school. This proportion dropped to 62% between 4 and 6 months on Aftercare, and to 48% for 7 - 9 months in Aftercare. Less than 10% enroll in vocational

school during their Aftercare experience and less than 2% are thus enrolled until 10 months Aftercare experience. The proportion involved in paid employment varies from 15% to 26% during the first 9 months on Aftercare and then drops off. In the first three months of Aftercare, 88% of the youth are involved in either school or employment. From four to six months 69% are so involved, and after 6 months the percentage drops to below 60%.

The Case Review Form data base provides information on two "outcome" measures, both indications of subsequent law-abiding or law-violating behavior during the post-program period of Aftercare supervision. The first measure, shown in Part A of Table 4, involves violations of Aftercare.

Youths were least likely to violate during the first three months of supervision and after one year. During the 4 - 6 month and 10 - 12 month periods technical violations were more likely than new law violations.

Part B of Table 4 displays the second outcome measure: type of discharge. Of the 34 Youth Camp Aftercare cases discharged during 1977, 53% were honorable discharges, 38% were recommitted or revoked to Youth Services and 6% went to Adult Court. The majority of all cases were discharged within nine months, regardless of result.

## Table 4

### Aftercare Outcome Measures

A. Percent of Youth Camp Aftercare Cases Committing Violations (By Number of Months on Aftercare)

| Type of Violation | Number of Months on AC | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 0 - 3 | 4 - 6 | 7 - 9 | 10 - 12 | 13 - 18 | 19+ |
| None | 91 | 82 | 90 | 89 | 95 | 97 |
| New law violation | 6 | 7 | 6 | -- | 5 | 2 |
| Technical violation | 2 | 11 | 4 | 11 | -- | 1 |
| TOTAL | 99 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| | | | | | (N=479) | |

B. Percent of Youth Camp Aftercare Cases in Each Loss Category (By Number of Months on Aftercare When Discharged)

| Type of Loss | 0 - 3 | 4 - 6 | 7 - 9 | 10 - 12 | 13 - 18 | 19+ | Total | % of Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Honorable Discharge | 6(1) | 17(3) | 22(4) | 38(7) | 11(2) | 6(1) | 100%(18) | 53 |
| YS Recommitment | 50(2) | 25(1) | -- | -- | -- | 25(1) | 100%( 4) | 12 |
| AC Revocation | 44(4) | 44(4) | -- | 12(1) | -- | -- | 100%( 9) | 27 |
| Adult Court | -- | 50(1) | -- | -- | 50(1) | -- | 100%( 2) | 6 |
| Other | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- | 100(1) | 100%( 1) | 3 |
| | | | | | | | | 100% |

## E. RECIDIVISM

This section of the evaluation examines follow-up data on the 57 youths furloughed from Youth Camps between June 1975 - July 1976. The purpose of this follow-up is to determine recidivism rates at 12 months, and again at 18 months, from program completion. Recidivism is of interest to those who fund as well as those who manage programs because it is the most costly form of failure, since the youth return to expensive commitment programs. The definition utilized by Youth Services for evaluation purposes is:

> Recidivism: Subsequent revocation or recommitment to the juvenile justice system, or admission to the adult criminal justice system by being placed on adult probation, given a suspended sentence or committed to a jail or prison.

Table 5 presents the recidivism data for the Youth Camp follow-up population. Twelve months after furlough, 47% had recidivated, yielding a 53% success rate. Eighteen months after furlough the recidivism rate was 60%, reciprocally yielding a 40% success rate.

Females were less likely to recidivate than males during the first year on Aftercare. Within 18 months, this difference disappeared. This finding is most unusual since females have generally been found in other Youth Services studies to have recidivism rates as low as half the rates for males. Both males and females were far more likely to be recommitted than revoked.

Sixteen youths (15 male, 1 female) had more than one recidivism during the 18-month follow-up period. The average time period from release to recidivism was 249 days. Males average 235 days and females 323 days.

The average length of time from furlough to recidivism for those who recidivated was 249 days. Males averaged 235 days and females 3 months longer, 323 days.

## Table 5

## Recidivism

A. TWELVE MONTH RECIDIVISM RATE:

47% recidivism 12 months after furlough

Females: 38% recidivism (3 of 8)

Recommitted: 3

Males: 49% recidivism (24 of 48)

Revoked: 10

Recommitted: 14

B. EIGHTEEN MONTH RECIDIVISM RATE

60% recidivism 18 months after furlough

Females: 63% recidivism (5 of 8)

Recommitted: 5

Males: 60% recidivism (29 of 48)

Revoked: 11

Recommitted: 18

C. MULTIPLE RECIDIVISM

16 youths had more than one recidivism during the 18-month follow-up period (15 males, 1 female).

## F. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY CONCERNS

1. HRS contracts for beds for 105 youths in Eckerd Camps annually, yet no more than 68 youths are placed each year. This is due, in part, to lengths of stay in excess of the budgeted one year, so that beds are not vacated for new placements. These overlong stays also increase the cost per case. The Department should consider budgeting for a longer stay per case and adjust the number of slots accordingly or the camps should be directed to reduce their average length of stay.

2. The 1978 legislature substantially revised Ch. 39 F.S. This legislation removes ungovernables from delinquency adjudication and limits the commitment time for delinquent youths to not more than the time that would be served by adults for the same offense. For second degree misdemeanant offenses, the commitment time would be limited to not more than 60 days. Between 15% and 30% of the youths included in this evaluation fall into these two categories. The Department should develop clear criteria for the kinds of youth to be referred to this program.

3. 95% of the youth placed in the Youth Camp program between January and October 1977 were first commitments and for 84% the Camp was the initial placement. Department placement officials should analyze the value of such prolonged periods of commitment for first commitment youth. The term "emotionally problemed youth" for whom the program is ostensibly designed should be defined in more concrete terms.

4. Aftercare (AC) Services provided to youths released from the Eckerd Camps appear to be meagre. Less than 20% attend groups and although 80% of those on AC for 0 - 3 months are seen individually by their counselor, the percentage drops sharply after 3 months on AC. Parents are seen as often as the youths. There is a need for closer contact by the AC counselors with the youths they supervise and probably also a need, given high caseloads, for a much greater use of volunteers.

5. Youths in Eckerd Camps are 1 to 2 years younger than youths in other commitment programs. One would expect nearly all to return to school following release from the program. Yet, the percentage not in school or working is 12% within the first three months after release and increases to 31% during the period 4-6 months after release.

APPENDIX

List of Offenses - Grouped

| | |
|---|---|
| Felony - Against Persons: | Murder<br>Manslaughter<br>Sexual Battery<br>Armed Robbery<br>Other Robbery<br>Aggravated Assault |
| Felony - Property: | Arson<br>Burglary/B&E<br>Grand Larceny<br>Auto Theft<br>Receiving Stolen Property<br>Other Felony |
| Felony - Victimless: | Concealed Firearm<br>Narcotic Drug Law Violation |
| Misdemeanor - Against Persons: | Non-aggravated Assault |
| Misdemeanor - Property: | Unauthorized use of Motor Vehicle<br>Petit Larceny<br>Shoplifting |
| Misdemeanor - Victimless: | Marijuana<br>Other Drug Law Violation<br>Alcoholic Beverage Offense<br>Concealed Weapon (exept firearm)<br>Criminal Mischief<br>Trespassing<br>Prostitution<br>Misdemeanor Sex Offense<br>Disorderly Intoxication<br>Loitering and Prowling<br>Traffic (delinquency)<br>Other Misdemeanor |
| Ungoverable: | 1st time ungovernable<br>Two previous adjudications |
| Technical: | Violation of Probation<br>Violation of Aftercare |